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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2192  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9216  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7466  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5315  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3619  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5241  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0105  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0776  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4363  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9776  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 7067  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0097  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3931  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

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SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT NOTES DESTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE OF  
RAJAPAKSA

Classified By: AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) In a December 14 meeting with Ambassador, former President Chandrika Kumaratunga discussed President Rajapaksa's abuse of power and said that under his leadership, the economy, the political climate, health care, education and international relations had spiraled down reaching a new low in the country's history. Kumaratunga remarked that governance had broken down and corruption was appallingly bad. She noted that while she was responsible for nominating President Rajapaksa for the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), he had a detrimental impact on the party. President Kumaratunga found the Rajapaksa family involvement in politics very distasteful and called them "uneducated and uncultured rascals." She worried that the political climate since her term had become "vindictive and threatening" and that Rajapaksa had "muddled the thinking" of the masses.

12. (C) In response to Ambassador's query on elections and General Fonseka's candidacy, President Kumaratunga said, while she was surprised by Fonseka's entry into politics, if "free and fair" elections were held today, Fonseka would win. In the same breath, however, she noted that Fonseka's negatives were insurmountable for many voters especially the Tamils and, thus, the Tamil vote was still in question. In Kumaratunga's opinion, Fonseka was the only man who could counter the President's "war victory" strategy. She reminded the Ambassador that it was her administration that cleared 70 percent of the Northern Province and that Rajapaksa was only responsible for clearing 30 percent of the LTTE-held grounds. Conversely, the Rajapaksas were falsely taking sole credit for winning the war. In her opinion, Fonseka would need the Tamil votes to win, and while the United National Party (UNP) leader Ranil Wickremesinghe could command the Tamil vote, this was not a guarantee with Fonseka. While Fonseka came from a Buddhist extremist background, he seemed more honest than Rajapaksa and might not go back on his promises. She noted that the State-owned media, Rajapaksa's propaganda machine, had been very effective and had brain-washed the masses. Kumaratunga observed that the rural people referred

to Rajapaksa as "King" and pointed to the President's 12 foot billboard cut-outs as distasteful examples of abuse of power.

13. (C) Ambassador raised the issue of international expectations about accountability and reconciliation in reference to the release of the Department's war crimes report. Kumaratunga said that there was a fear psychosis in the country and that President Rajapaksa had instilled a fear in the people, so no one was willing to talk. She disagreed on Rajapaksa's stance with the West and said that foreign criticisms, international pressure and monitoring had kept the human rights violations from getting worse. On the issue of Tamils, Kumaratunga noted that the vast majority of Tamils were not terrorists and did not want a separate State, but rather fundamental rights. According to Kumaratunga there were 800,000 Tamils overseas and the diaspora was now ready for change. In the last few months, Kumaratunga acknowledged the mood and the thinking in the country was changing. People were hopeful of change and were interested in moving ahead. Although Kumaratunga was no longer directly involved in politics, she remarked that President Rajapaksa feared her influence and had restricted her movements.  
BUTENIS